DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 833 HE 018 878

AUTHOR Brum, Joseph, Jr.
TITLE A Study of Societal Factors Which Have Influenced Adults to Withdraw from the Business Administration Curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute. Societal Factors Affecting Education.
PUB DATE 24 May 83
NOTE 27p.; Doctoral Practicum Paper, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Administration Education; *College Students; *Dropout Research; Higher Education; Questionnaires; *Student Attrition; *Technical Institutes; *Withdrawal (Education)
IDENTIFIERS *Fayetteville Technical Institute NC

ABSTRACT

Reasons why students studying business administration withdrew from Fayetteville Technical Institute (North Carolina) were examined. Questionnaires mailed to a random sample of 30 former students were completed by 26 dropouts who had been enrolled at the institute during 1981-1982. Responses from 26 students were classified as nonsocietal or societal (i.e., elements of influence that are external to the institution). The most frequently stated societal reasons for not returning to business administration included transfer to another college, change in job requirements, and change in career plans. The most frequent nonsocietal reasons were financial problems and desire for time off. There was no significant difference in withdrawal reasons for students who had completed two as opposed to three consecutive quarters. The findings correlate strongly with similar studies found in the literature. A followup study to identify action that will reduce the impact of nonsocietal factors and assure maximum retention of qualified business administrative curriculum students is recommended. The questionnaire is appended. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED263833

A STUDY OF SOCIETAL FACTORS WHICH HAVE INFLUENCED ADULTS TO WITHDRAW FROM THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION CURRICULUM AT FAYETTEVILLE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

SOCIETAL FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATION

by

Joseph Brum, Jr., M.B.A.

Fayetteville Technical Institute

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joseph Brum, Jr.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DR. BOYD AYERS

FORT BRAGG

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

[X] This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

[ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

May 24, 1983

ABSTRACT

Reasons why students withdrew from the Business Administration curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute were examined through a survey of thirty dropouts. Twenty-six responses were examined and the reasons given by the students were classified as societal or non-societal. In this study, societal factors are defined as those elements of influence that are external to the institution. The most frequently stated societal reasons for not returning to the Business Administration curriculum include: transfer to another college; change in job requirements; and change in career plans. The most frequent nonsocietal reasons were financial problems and desire for time off. A follow-up study to identify action that will reduce the impact of nonsocietal factors and assure maximum retention of qualified Business Administrative curriculum students is recommended. It is also suggested that a similar survey be conducted bi-annually to identify any new factors and evaluate the institution's efforts to reduce the nonsocietal factors. The survey instrument and tabulated responses are appended.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE	3
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	8
BASIC ASSUMPTIONS	8
PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING DATA	9
PROCEDURES FOR TREATING DATA	9
RESULTS AND FINDINGS	11
DISCUSSION, IMPLEMENTATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	12
REFERENCES	16
APPENDIX A - Questionnaire	18
APPENDIX B - Tabulation of Responses	22

INTRODUCTION

The community college is that component of post secondary education which is most sensitive to the local community social structure and its divergent needs. The community college's open-door policy has invited an influx of "new" students into the classroom, many of whom exhibit a low basic skill in reading and mathematics. It behooves the community college, now more than ever before, to develop new instructional programs that are flexible enough to serve the community at large (Cross, 1981).

Community college instructors, today, are advisors, facilitators, instructional managers, curriculum designers, academic instructors, and evaluators of instruction. They seek alternative methods to fulfill their duties as teachers and try to expand their ways to be meaningful to students. Drawing upon a variety of teaching models in order to combine these roles in a program that is enlightened, inspired, consistent, efficient, and effective, they master a repertoire of teaching approaches to use in carrying out their roles.

Some current educational and social controversial studies that were completed in the past include a study by Parelius (1978) which includes the relationship of formal schooling to occupational attainment, streaming of students and grading practices, the occupational status of teachers, and student unrest in the universities. Their analysis of

several major educational issues is very clear, in particular those on teacher professionalism, sex discrimination, and equal educational opportunity.

Community colleges are sometimes called "People Colleges", "Democracy's Colleges", and "Opportunity Colleges." Whatever the term, they connotate informality, accessibility, practical approaches, a cooperative stance, and high value placed on individual and community development. The aim is to develop a community of learners. Learning is perceived as an essential element in living (Gleazer, 1980). Faculty face the challenging assignment of improving the learning process in an institution with an ever-increasing breadth of program and an ever-increasing diversity of students. They come to their task with good academic credentials but not necessarily good preparation for the actual work they will do (Gleazer, 1972).

A recent investigation conducted by the Registrar at Fayetteville Technical Institute revealed that there has been approximately a forty percent dropout rate of first-term Business Administration students from the curriculum. In the light of the forecast trend toward smaller college enrollments, it behooves every institution to ensure that qualified students are not dissuaded from continuing their education by factors over which the institution has control (Laden, 1976). The purpose of this

practicum was to identify and classify as societal or nonscietal those factors which contributed to the student's decision not to return. To accomplish this purpose, a questionnaire (Appendix B) was sent to thirty students who were in the Business Administration curriculum, but voluntarily did not return to Fayetteville Technical Institute. This questionnaire requested that the students identify the reason they did not return and solicited their comments on the subject. The responses were tabulated and the various reasons were categorized as societal or nonsocietal.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Fayetteville Technical Institute originated in 1961 as the Fayetteville Area Industrial Education Center under the auspices of the City Board of Education. In 1963, the North Carolina General Assembly created the Department of Community Colleges for the expressed purpose of providing for the establishment, organization, and administration of a system of educational institutions throughout the state offering courses of instruction in one or more of the general areas of two-year college parallel, technical, vocational, and adult education programs. The authority for the newly created department was vested in the North Carolina State Board of Education.

The center became a part of this system at that time (Fayetteville Technical Institute Catalog, 1980-1983).

Fayetteville Technical Institute is a coeducational, residential community college for day and evening students. The college, which is located in Fayetteville, North Carolina, has a student body of approximately 7,000 students and a faculty of approximately 200 full-time professional educators. Associate degrees are offered in Business Occupation Education, Engineering Technology Education, General Education, Health Occupational Education, Public Service Occupational Education, and Vocational Educational Education (FTI Catalog, 1980-1983).

In North Carolina, the opportunities in business are increasing. With the increasing population and industrial development in this state, business has become more competitive and automated. Better opportunities in business will be filled by students with specialized education beyond the high school level. The Business Administration curriculum is designed to prepare the student for employment in one of the many occupations common to business. Training is aimed at preparing the student in many phases of administrative work that might be encountered in the average business.

The specific objectives of the Business Administration curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute are to develop the following competencies:

1. Understanding of the principles of organization and management in business operation.

2. Understanding our economy through study and analysis of the role of production and marketing.

3. Knowledge in specific elements of accounting, finance and business law (Fayetteville Technical Institute Catalog, 1980-1983).

Many post secondary institutions today are faced with possible budget reductions, faculty dismissals, and excess capacity in physical plants because of declining enrollments. In addition to this dilemma, the recurring economic problems of the country have dimmed the appropriations outlook for many schools by reducing state revenue expectations (Gorman, 1976). Although these foreboding signals are disturbing to the academic community, they are part of a recognized pattern which most business enterprises experience on a cyclic basis (Gorman, 1976). In addition to business, many non-profit organizations outside of public education have also experienced this cycle in their never-ending battle to raise money. In the forefront of these organizations are many private junior colleges and private liberal arts colleges. As a way of competing for donation dollars, these schools have invested heavily in marketing techniques for a number of years. With the likelihood of decreasing student enrollments, many private and public colleges and universities

are now also adopting marketing techniques as a way of attracting students (Gorman, 1976).

Indeed, over the past couple of years, the term "marketing" has supplanted the term "recruitment" within the jargon of higher education. It is important to note that marketing implies more than tacit recruitment or sales (Huddleston, 1976). It implies planning, identifying groups to whom the service will appeal, doing research to learn their needs and preferences, developing a service, distribution planning, pricing, and production (Kotler, 1977). The nucleus of marketing, therefore, is attracting and servicing a public.

Cohen (1979) endorsed the student goals approach when he stated that we should ask students who have matriculated in a community college what they want and what they are getting. Unfortunately, this has not been the approach employed by most educational institutions. In fact, the report issued by North Carolina's Division of Community Colleges found "that there has been little documentation or research of student-defined goals within higher education (Student Goals Catalog, 1976). This lack of research was re-affirmed in a later study by Beeler (1977). He concluded that while colleges have a sincere desire to meet students needs, instances of systematic inventorying and appraising of programs designed to meet this goal are few. Beeler (1977) recommends that

"suitable instruments be developed that refer to specific aspects of the environment that can be changed by administrative actions."

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. This study measured only the responses of former business administration curriculum students at Fayetteville Technical Institute. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized beyond the Department of Business/ Economics, Fayetteville Technical Institute.

2. The self-administered questionnaire may have limited accuracy, truthfulness, and clarity of response.

3. The data of the study was limited to the opinions and perceptions held by the respondents to the questionnaire.

4. The study was limited because no attempt was made to validate the questionnaire statistically.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. The students who responded to the questionnaire were normally distributed with regards to race, sex, age, and intelligence.

2. The students who responded to the questionnaire were truthful in their responses.

3. The nature of the items on the questionnaire were sufficient to determine differences in the reasons for attendance.

PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING DATA

A list of all business administration curriculum students enrolled at Fayetteville Technical Institute during the Fall, Winter and Spring quarters of the 1981-1982 academic year was compared with a list of students enrolled in either the Fall quarter of 1982 or the Winter quarter of 1983. Names appearing on the first list but not on the latter were identified as nonreturning students. This list was then purged of the names of students who have graduated and of those dismissed for academic or other reasons. The remaining list contained the names of 125 students who attended Fayetteville Technical Institute during the 1981-1982 academic year but voluntarily failed to return for the 1982-1983 calendar year. The population of 125 former Business Administration students was then broken down into two groups -- one group of students who have completed two full consecutive quarters within the Business Administration curriculum and the second group consisted of students who have completed three full consecutive quarters within the Business Administration curriculum. From these two groups, a random sampling of thirty students was conducted by selecting every fourth name. Each student on these two lists of voluntary nonreturnees was sent a questionnaire (see Appendix A) inquiring as to the reasons for his/her withdrawal.

The questionnaire was developed by selecting the most significant reasons found in the review of literature in the form of statements to be checked by the respondent. Space was provided for the student to add comments or additional reasons in the event of an omission in the checked responses. It was felt that a "check list" questionnaire would evoke a higher level of response than a questionnaire requiring written answers. The letter introducing the questionnaire was written as a personal appeal from a fellow student rather than an institution initiated survey. This appeal, which was accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope, was designed to evoke maximum participation.

The responses to the questionnaire were tabulated and percentage of responses attributable to each reason calculated. Reasons appearing in the comments section of the questionnaire were also included in the tabulation. Any reason receiving less than a five percent response was considered extraneous and not indicative of an important societal or nonsocietal factor. Finally, the reasons were categorized as societal or nonsocietal factors.

Three Business Administration instructors and two Business Administration counselors at Fayetteville Technical Institute participated in the development of the questionnaire. Since these faculty and staff members have frequent contact with students who have withdrawn or

are in the process of withdrawing, they have attested to the face validity of the procedures and questionnaires.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Of the thirty questionnaires mailed out, twenty-six were returned for a response rate of eighty-six percent.

Appendix B contains a tabulation of responses to each of the statements and two additional reasons given in the comments section of the questionnaires. Table 1 below shows the categorization of these responses as societal factors, as well as the percentage of responses to each factor.

TABLE 1

Societal Factors Influencing Students' Decisions Not to Return to the Business Administration Curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute

Factor	Percent Response
Transferred to another college	19
Financial reasons - returned to work	16
Change career plans	12
Desire for time off	10
Personal family problems	5
Sickness	5
End of GI Bill	5

It may be observed that financial need, transfer to another college, returned to work, change in career plans and the desire for time off head the list of factors influencing students' decisions to withdraw from school. As indicated in Appendix B, there is no significant difference (percentage) of withdrawal reasons for students who have completed two consecutive quarters and students who have completed three consecutive quarters of Business Administration curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute.

DISCUSSION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There appears to be a strong positive correlation between the factors identified in this practicum and those reported by similar studies, as discussed in the review of the literature. As anticiapted, however, the factors affecting Fayetteville Technical Institute students' decisions to discontinue their education are weighted towards the employment objectives with "financial reasons - returned to work" and "change in career plans" receiving strong response as societal factors. Transferring to another college was rated high in both the practicum and the previous studies. This strong positive correlation further attests to the validity and reliability of the current effort.

The purpose of this practicum was to identify and classify as societal and nonsocietal those factors which influence students' decisions not to return to Fayetteville Technical Institute. Table 1 reflects the classification of those factors. Obviously, some of the factors might have been classified as either societal or nonsocietal, depending on the reason for that factor becoming a decision criteria. For example, "Financial Problem" would be classified as nonsocietal if the problems were a result of insufficient financial aid available at the school or an administrative decision to limit financial aid to people in certain disciplines or with certain academic averages. On the other hand, "Financial Problem" would be classified as a societal factor if the problem resulted from lack of parental financial support or as a result of non-school debts incurred by the student, i.e., buying a new car, having a baby, etc. In cases where the factor could be classified as either societal or nonsocietal, a unilateral best judgement decision was made. For example, it was felt that adequate financial aid is available through co-op, work-study, direct student loans, scholarships, grants, and part-time employment to meet the financial requirements of practically every needy student. Because the students are frequently unaware of the aid available, however, they may drop out of school and accept full-time employment. "Financial Problem" may be symptomatic

of an institutional deficiency in disseminating information about available financial aid, and the factor was therefore classified as nonsocietal. Similar analysis was applied to each of the factors, and the categorization as shown in Table 1 reflects a "best judgement" of the information available.

As stated previously, the purpose of this practicum was merely to identify and categorize the factors. It was not to develop recommendations that would minimize the impact of these factors. It is appropriate to note that the information received from the present survey, particularly the students' comments, will provide an excellent starting point from which the follow-on study may be launched. It was with that end in mind that the original questionnaire was modified to include information concerning "completed consecutive quarters" and "last quarter attended." It may be implied, then, that this study will ultimately result in a set of recommended changes and procedures which, when implemented, will reduce the impact of the nonsocietal factors and ensure maximum retention of qualified Business Administration students at Fayetteville Technical Institute.

Based on the valuable information obtained from this study, three recommendations are made. First, a follow-on study should be undertaken in the near future. This study should be a joint effort of several key

officers of the institution, namely the Registrar, the Director of Counseling, and the Business Administration Department Chairman. The study should recommend appropriate actions to reduce the impact of the nonsocietal factors identified in this practicum.

The second recommendation is that a survey similar to this practicum should be conducted by the institute on a regular biennial basis. The survey will identify areas for potential reduction of nonsocietal factors and provide a tool for evaluation of the efforts directed and reducing those efforts.

The third recommendation is that the questionnaire should be mailed out to all former Business Administration curriculum students. In addition, the number of each consecutive quarters, in which the student has completed, should be eliminated, since it resulted in no significant differences in the study.

The information obtained from this practicum and the implementation of its recommendations should enhance the Business Administration Department's ability to retain qualified students and reduce attrition by a significant percentage.

REFERENCES

Beeler, Kent D. "Inventorying Student Needs and Perceptions of Available Help: A Simplified Approach." Paper presented at the annual convention of the Michigan College Personnel Association, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 1977.

Cohen, Arthur M. "Shall We Segregate the Functionally Illiterate?" Community and Junior College Journal, 1979.

Cross, P. K. Adults as Learners. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1981.

Damarin, Suzanne F. Technology in the Classroom: Initiative or Response? New Directions in Curriculum Development. February 1982, ED 213476.

Division of Community Colleges, North Carolina Department of Education. Student Goals Catalog and Handbook for Utilization. Raleigh, North Carolina, 1976.

Fayetteville Technical Institute Catalog, 1980-1983, Fayetteville, North Carolina 28303.

Gleazer, Edward J. Project Focus: A Forecast Study of Community Colleges. McGraw Hill, Inc., 1973.

Gleazer, Edward J. The Community College: VALUES, VISION, and VITALITY. American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Washington, DC, 1980.

Gorman, Walter P. "An Evaluation of Student-Attracting Methods and University Features by Attending Students. College and University, Winter, 1976.

Huddleston, Thomas, Jr. "Marketing: The Applicant Questionnaire." Collge and University, Winter 1976.

Kotler, Philip. "Why We Need Marketing." Case Currents, 1977.

Laden, Ben E. The Effects of Inflation on College and University Finances, T. Rowe Price Associates, Inc., Baltimore, 1976.

Parelius, Ann Parker, and Robert J. Parelius. The Sociology of Education. Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1978.

APPENDIX A

May 1, 1983

Dear

Would you please help me? As part of my graduate studies, I have been asked to determine the reasons why students like yourself who were in school last year did not return this year. Would you take a few moments to check all boxes on the attached questionnaire, which are appropriate to you. I have enclosed a stamped, self-addressed envelope for you to return your completed questionnaire.

Your cooperation will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH BRUM
Department of Business/Economics
Fayetteville Technical Institute

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Check the appropriate boxes:

A. The last time I attended Fayetteville Technical Institute was:

__ 1. Fall __ 2. Winter __ 3. Spring

B. I have completed:

__ 4. Two full consecutive quarters at FTI

__ 5. Three full consecutive quarters at FTI

C. I did not return to the Business Administration curriculum this year because:

__ 6. For financial reasons, I had to return to work.

__ 7. I got married.

__ 8. I got sick or had sickness in my family.

__ 9. I had personal or family problems.

__ 10. I didn't think the advantages were worth the effort.

__ 11. I did poorly and didn't think I could pass.

__ 12. I just wanted some time off.

__ 13. I had trouble with a teacher or administrator.

__ 14. I transferred to another college.

__ 15. I didn't have good transportation to and from school.

__ 16. The cost of books were too high.

__ 17. I needed help with my studies and couldn't get it.

__ 18. I had a change in career plans.

__ 19. Other reasons (please list below).

APPENDIX B

Tabulation of Reasons Withdrawing from the Business Administration Curriculum at Fayetteville Technical Institute

(26 Respondents)	1(a) Number of Respondents	1(b) Percentage of Respondents	2(a) Number of Responses	2(b) Percentage of Responses
A. Last quarter attending the Business Administration curriculum at FTI:				
1. Fall 1982	3	12	4	15
2. Winter 1982	9	35	6	23
3. Spring 1983	2	8	2	8
B. I have completed:				
4. Two full consecutive quarters at FTI	14	54	12	46
5. Three full consecutive quarters at FTI				
C. Reasons for not returning:				
6. Financial reasons - returned to work	5	17	4	15
7. Got married	1	3	1	4
8. Illness	1	3	2	7
9. Personal Problem	2	7	1	4
10. Advantages not worth effort	1	3	1	4

		1(a) Number of Respondents	1(b) Percentage of Respondents	2(a) Number of Responses	2(b) Percentage of Responses
11.	Change in career plans	3	10	4	14
12.	Needed help but couldn't get it	1	3	0	0
13.	Poor academic performance	0	0	1	4
14.	Wanted time off	3	10	3	11
15.	Problem with a teacher or administrator	1	3	1	4
16.	Transferred to another college	6	20	5	18
17.	Poor Transportation	1	3	2	7
18.	High cost of books and tuition	1	3	0	0
19.	Other reasons (see 20 through 21)	2	7	3	11
D.	Reasons Provided in Comments:				
20.	Entered military service	1	3	1	4
21.	Veterans'benefits expired	1	3	2	7

1(a) & 1(b) indicate the number and percentages of students who have completed two full consecutive quarters of Business Administration curriculum. There were a total of 30 responses in this category.

2(a) & 2(b) indicate the number and percentages of students who have completed three full consecutive quarters of Business Administration. There were a total of 28 responses in this category.